

# Who Cares Who Finished Second in New Hampshire?

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Despite efforts by candidates and the media to create a story that Mitt Romney -- despite having won Iowa and New Hampshire, and having more money, endorsements and organization than any other candidate in the race -- has still not wrapped up the nomination, Romney has, in fact, all but clinched the Republican nomination for president.

Some may attribute Romney's victory to the work the Super-PAC which supported his campaign did in Iowa to cut the legs out from under Newt Gingrich just as Gingrich was beginning to get some momentum, or to Romney's fundraising prowess making it possible to buy more media time, and buy it further in advance than any other candidate. These assertions are both true, but they just underscore Romney's advantage rather than explain how he got that advantage. Gingrich was vulnerable to attacks in Iowa because he did not have enough money to fight back. Similarly, Rick Santorum's strong second place showing in Iowa victory meant almost nothing because he did not have the resources to immediately build up his campaign activities in New Hampshire and South Carolina.

The most puzzling, and overlooked, question of the nominating season thus far is why Gingrich, Santorum, Herman Cain and Michele Bachmann never raised enough money to be serious contenders. Any experienced political consultant with whom they would have spoken about their race would have urged them to focus on raising money for 2010 and most of 2011, but all of these candidates were unwilling to engage in that difficult and often discouraging work. Therefore, when their moments came, all they could do was hope their luck would not run out, but this happened very quickly for each of them. Front loaded primary schedules mean candidate's can no longer raise money off of early primary victories, but this group of alleged candidates never understood, or wanted to understand, that.

Romney's primary victory is, to some extent, evidence that the right wing radicals have not completely taken over the Republican Party, but it is more accurately understood as evidence that the old way of campaigning is still important. In this age of the internet, social networking, smartphones and the like, Romney destroyed Gingrich's hopes using some technology and tactics, specifically television commercials, rooted firmly in the middle of the 20th century.

In some respects, Barack Obama's 2008 campaign remains the model for using current media technology to reach voters and build support. Obama's campaign mobilized voters through social network sites and facilitated pro-Obama videos going viral that were, at least by campaign standards, hip, funny and inspiring. The Obama campaign's mastery of new technologies reinforced the perception of generational difference between Obama and his main primary

opponent, Hillary Clinton, as well as his general election opponent, John McCain. However, it was Obama's fundraising prowess that facilitated his exploitation of modern communication tools. Had Obama not had enough money, he would have been just another smart candidate fallen by the wayside of the Clinton machine.

Romney, who ran in 2008 as well, seems to have internalized this critical lesson, that internet campaign pyrotechnics will go nowhere without fundraising. This also dovetailed well with Romney's strength as a candidate. While Romney can never be as inspiring, charismatic or smart as Obama, he understood that he could put together an organization and fundraising operation that could compare to Obama's. To be clear, although Romney may have learned some good lessons from Obama's 2008 victory, the former Massachusetts governor remains a Republican who, while not comfortable with the divisive and radical rhetoric of most of his competitors, is still committed to redistributing wealth upwards. Of course, Romney's organization has not yet been tested by any of his opponents, so we will have to wait to the general election to get a better sense of how strong Romney's campaign operation is. Only then will he have an opponent in any real sense, one who will have the resources to counter attacks and match Romney on the airwaves and on the ground.

While Romney seems to have learned from Obama's 2008 campaign, the rest of the Republican Field seems to have taken their campaign cues from another politician who played a big role in 2008, Sarah Palin. Gingrich, Cain, Bachmann Santorum, have all built campaigns based on the Palin tactics of making bold and divisive statements rather than informed or thoughtful ones, avoiding nuance at all costs, and seeking to build a campaign around media attention rather than organization and money. It is an encouraging reflection of both our political system and the American electorate that none of these campaigns have gotten any real traction. As damaging it is to have a political system dominated by money; it would be worse to have one dominated by ignorance and laziness.